Toward
(and Away From)
A
(Potential)
Nagean Pataphysics

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And so, my dear reader, I offer to you an Anti-outline for a potential Nagean Pataphysics.[1] In his '*Pataphysics: The Poetics of an Imaginary Science,* Christian Bök suggests that "'pataphysicians reinterpret their antecedent practitioners, misreading them in order to avoid the normalization of such abnormalities." (Bök 2002, p. 45.) He then goes on to discuss Futurist Pataphysics,[2] 'Pataphysics as practiced by the Oulipo, and the Pataphysics of what he calls the "Canadian Jarryites." Here then, is a fresh misreading, carrying within it all the possible benefits of ingenuity and novelty.

It has become a truism that the paradigmatic Pataphysician is Jarry's Dr. Faustroll, and that, thus, the book that bears his name, *The Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician,* is the paradigmatic[3] Pataphysical text. It is, after all, the book with the Anti-discipline's name on the cover, and is, in order of publication, the final word on the subject by Jarry himself. All fine arguments but, to my mind, lacking the spark of outlandishness that I find necessary for a really interesting (mis)read. Thus I have been drawn inexorably to the conclusion (having started out with this conclusion, and having travelled mentally in a nearly perfect circle - that kind of circle which, of course, can exist *only* mentally [My italics.] - it was mathematically inevitable that I should, in due course, reach this same conclusion once more at the end of this metaphorical journey) that my own Pataphysics (I might say "our own," but only to heighten the grandeur of the coming statement) must take as its founder and Anti-paradigm a different figure, along

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1 A potential Pataphysics is, of course, the only kind of Pataphysics which can (Anti-)exist.

2 An especially 'pataphysical notion…

3 Or should we say "patadigmatic?"

with all of the (Anti-)ideas implicated by this figure. And, upon intimate reflection and a great many rolls of dice,[4] I have struck upon the founding father of my (may I say "our?") own potential diocese of the Temple Pataphysic: Dr. Faustroll's ass-faced baboon cabin-boy, Bosse-de-Nage.

Let us sit and ponder for a paragraph or two about this most mysterious of literary personages. Perhaps the most obvious thing that strikes us about him is this: he is an (fictional) ape. This fact, in itself, might seem unimportant, but to grasp the true significance of this observation, we must set him up against his master, Dr. Faustroll, who is (significantly) a (fictional) man. With the concept of (fictional) evolution thrown in as a catalyst, we find that Bosse-de-Nage represents (signifies) *an earlier stage along the evolution of (fictional) Man*, i.e., Dr. Faustroll. (My italics.) The importance of this fact will be made clear to you presently. There is an Anti-reason for my highlighting the fact that Bosse-de-Nage is a *fictional character*. (My italics.) You may object that Dr. Faustroll is also fictional; however, he is not, I would argue, *as fictional*. (My italics.) Throughout *Faustroll,*[5] the *fictionality* (My italics.) of Bosse-de-Nage is repeatedly underscored. For instance, three chapters after Bosse-de-Nage's death at the hands of Dr. Faustroll (There is more than a hint of Cain and Abel in this scene), we find that, "the spectre of

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[4] Which, however, did not abolish chance.

[5] From this point on, in order to avoid confusion, I will warn you that all book titles presented in italics are not, strictly speaking, either *my* italics (My italics.) or the original *author's* italics (My italics.) but rather are italicised in accordance with the habitual practice of academia. I will not note these cases parenthetically in the body of the text, for fear that the mark (My italics.) should become frustrating or imposing, which I wish, at all costs, to avoid.

Bosse-de-Nage - who, having only existed imaginarily, could not really die - manifested itself, said 'ha ha' respectfully, then was silent, awaiting orders." More (it would appear) than either of the book's other main protagonists (Faustroll and Panmuphle) Bosse-de-Nage is a creature of the text; his existence is tied up intricately with it - to the point of making him immortal.[6]

When he is first introduced, it is noted that, "This character will prove very useful during the course of this book, to punctuate some of its overlong speeches." (Jarry 1965, p. 196.) Here again, we find that Bosse-de-Nage, in order to fulfill his function, must be aware of the *fictionality* (My italics.) of the story of which he is a part. The literary text is Bosse-de-Nage's world. And he is not only existent *within* the text (My italics.); he is characterized essentially *by* his use of language. (My italics.) For although Bosse-de-Nage does know a spattering of Belgian (for instance he calls a life belt, "swimming-bladder with inscription thereon,") (ibid, p. 196.) throughout the entire book and, we are made to understand, in most of his life generally, Bosse-de-Nage utters only two words- "Ha ha"- which he sees as fit for nearly every occasion; usually, as implied above, to interrupt or obscurely comment upon some speech or action in the novel. In fact, there is a chapter immediately after Bosse-de-Nage's first provisional death (a Pataphysical eulogy?) dedicated entirely to a meditation upon Bosse-de-Nage's

[6] In the shipwreck that marks the destruction of all three of these characters, we are treated to, "the carcass of Panmuphle and the body of Faustroll," (Jarry 1965, p. 245.) even though Faustroll does appear again later in Ethernity; Bosse-de-Nage, however, simply disappears, Faustroll simply writing later that he had, "lost… the society of Bosse-de-Nage." (ibid, p. 247.)

attachment to this near-mystical doubled syllable. It must be concluded then (Pataphysically speaking) that any Nagean Pataphysics must inevitably be closely bound up with the textuality itself of any discourse or subject with which it engages. It must treat the text, literary or otherwise, as a world whose evidence and phenomena bear equal validity with that of "the world" toward which that text may or may not refer or aspire.

Once again, (must I remind you?) we cannot overlook the relationship between the Pataphysician master (Dr. Faustroll) and the Pataphysician lackey (Bosse-de-Nage). And you can see how, my dear reader, through putting the matter thus, I have prepared the way for you to understand that, in relation to the doctor after whom the book is named, Bosse-de-Nage is in the decidedly *supplementary* role. (My italics.) Dr. Faustroll himself knows no impediments and wanders where he will, fully in command of his situation; Panmuphle, the ex-bailiff-turned galley slave, is chained to the boat. The "role of Bosse-de-Nage was to draw the skiff up on to the bank at each halt on our errant way, as also to interrupt our conversations, where a pause might be convenient, with his interjections." (ibid 1965, pp 199-200.) Free at the beginning of the book, coerced into accompanying the doctor, and dead at the end of it, Panmuphle's relationship with Faustroll is ultimately provisional. Bosse-de-Nage, however, has been with Faustroll since before the commencement of the book, which in Bosse-de-Nage's case (being purely a creature of the text) is eternity, or perhaps Ethernity. (It was Faustroll who, "by means of some strange medication," had grafted Bosse-de-Nage's colourful buttocks to his

cheeks, giving him his name [ibid, p.261.]). Despite this apparently immutable association with the doctor, Bosse-de-Nage's function is relegated to that of Faustroll's supplement both within the action of the story (as light for Faustroll's boat and muscle for landing it) and within the structure of the text in which he resides (as punctuation for his speeches and adventures). Since one of the definitions of Pataphysics given in Faustroll states that it, "will explain the universe supplementary to this one," (ibid, p. 192) this is undoubtedly (Pataphysically speaking) a point that must be taken into consideration in formulating a Nagean Pataphysics.

In discussing our former point, the close *textual* emphasis (My italics.) that must be an essential feature of a Nagean Pataphysics (the specific implications of which, in Pataphysical *practice*, [My italics.] will be delved into presently, dear reader, never fear), we can take momentary leave of Bosse-de-Nage, for there is considerable precedence for this in other Pataphysical enterprises as well. At its core, in fact, Pataphysics in all its forms is deeply rooted in rhetoric and rhetorical devices. For instance, in explaining the Anti-discipline, Faustroll's "Elements of Pataphysics" states that, "Instead of formulating the law of the fall of a body toward a centre, how far more apposite would be the law of the ascension of a vacuum toward a periphery…" (ibid, p.193.) What is being contested here is not so much a point of scientific accuracy or even pertinence, but the rhetorical coding of an abstract law. The Oulipo, who represent a department of the College of Pataphysics, work primarily through applying mathematic or systemic criteria not to arguments or theories, but to texts themselves. Canadian

"Pataphysician Steve McCaffrey, in his *A Zarathustran Pataphysics,* (McCaffery 2001, pp 15-30.) presents us with two columns side by side, one of which appears at first to be a near double of the other, but which is riddled with lettristic interventions. The introduction to the essay explains that, "the left, or 'erroneous,' column performs the 'correct' column's content. Specifically, it enacts, as well as speaks about, the inclination of the clinamen when the latter manifests within writing as a typographic 'error.'" (ibid, p. 15.) Within the confines of this text, McCaffery not only seems to locate the space of Pataphysical intervention exclusively within the text but implies that its defining action might take place primarily on the lettristic level.[7] [8] While McCaffrey and many of his fellow Canadian Pataphysicians concentrate generally upon bringing about a syzygy of linguistics with geological, archaeological, and other scientific discourses, it is, ultimately, the *discourse* (My italics.) that is manipulated, a re-grounding of science on an essentially iterable, subjective, and linguistic base. Speaking specifically of the Toronto Research Group but implicating the wide range of Canadian "pataphysics, Bök points out that, "Rather than embrace the royal

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[7] While McCaffrey's other writings on "pataphysics do not confine "pataphysical activity to this register, this essay does imply that application on this level might be considered a *sufficient* (My italics.) "pataphysical activity.

[8] It might be noted that while the Oulipo interprets 'pataphysics on a lettristic level by superinducing a rigorous mathematic model onto a supposedly less systemic textual system, McCaffrey, in *A Zarathustran Pataphysics,* focuses on the orderly nature of grammar and word formation, and thus his asystemic lettristic interventions take the form of clinamens (or ought it to be "clinami?") diverting the text from its "proper" pilgrimage toward unproblematic signification. The Oulipo focuses on superinduction as a Pataphysical deployment, McCaffery (here) on the principle of the clinamen.

imperialism of an objective science, such a think tank studies the nomad radicalism of a sophistic science… they risk the propriety of reasoning itself through the theoretical eclecticism of 'synthetic proposals'… Such research provides a ludic alibi for the mnemonic paralogy of a radical science." (Bök 2002, pp 84-85.)

In this quote, the word "science" comes up thrice in exactly 50 words, constituting 6% of the total word count of the quotation. In addition, the very subtitle of Bök's book is, "The Poetics of an Imaginary Science." If one wished to continue this imaginary question (for which I must, of course, scrape together an imaginary solution) concerning *why* (My italics.) I am positing a Pataphysics predicated on the text rather than on a scientific model. One might also note that Jarry himself often refers to Pataphysics as (among many other things) a science, and that many of the most famous examples of Pataphysical operations deal with scientific ideas. All fine arguments but, to my mind, lacking the spark of outlandishness that I find necessary for a really interesting (mis-)read.

Upon closer inspection however, we will find that textuality and metaphor are very much at stake even in these passages, and that, in fact, metaphoricity is sometimes the principle issue even with these most scientific of Jarrian passages. Faustroll's early adventure in which he shrinks to the size of a mite and explores the globules of water on a lettuce leaf is in fact inspired by a metaphor used by English scientist Sir William Crookes in an address given in 1897. (Jarry 1965, pp 16-17, 194-195, and 260.) The metaphor here is enlarged, given form, and inflated; Faustroll effectively creates for himself the opportunity to *live inside a metaphor*. (My italics.) His

experiments and observations in Ethernity are very largely drawn verbatim from Lord Kelvin, (ibid, pp 274-275.) as are passages concerning the water-jet (or in this case, semi-amphibious urine-jet), drawn from C.V. Boys, (p. 271) and the sieve-boat, paraphrased from Boys and Crookes. (p. 259.) In all of these cases, Jarryfaustroll is dealing as much with the incorporation of a scientific *text* (My italics.) into a literary *text* (My italics.) as with a negotiation with the *ideas* (My italics.) of the texts concerned, though the two operations cannot be entirely separated. Bök points out that, "Jarry does not borrow scientific *concepts* so much as scientific *conceits."* (Those were, believe it or not, in fact *Bök's* italics!) (My italics.) (Bök 2002, p. 29.) This terminology is particularly apt, since in addition to appropriating a scientific text, argot, or rhetorical mode, Jarry is also extending the Renaissance concept of the conceit, as embodied in the Metaphysical poets, to a farther extreme. This observation sheds an interesting light on Faustroll's boast of Pataphysics as, "extending as far beyond metaphysics as the latter extends beyond Physics."[9] [10]

So we can see that this salient method inherent in Pataphysics is not specifically the undermining of scientific univocality, but rather the invocation of a syzygy of an argot or an interpretive or generative model, and a subject or simultaneously employed discourse ostensibly at odds with it.[11] The choice of

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[9] One might ask the Pataphysical question: what might constitute a "Physical poet?"

[10] Nor, as we shall see later (unless you are reading this essay backwards), are all, or even necessarily the *majority* (My italics.) of Jarry's enactments of Pataphysics scientifically based.

[11] It might be argued that more than extending beyond Metaphysics, the Pataphysical engagement with *scientific* (My italics.) texts extends beyond *science* (My italics.) or "physics," making it, potentially, an (supplementary) Anti-sub-discipline extending *as* far (My italics.) as

science as a primary discourse to *employ* (My italics.) in Pataphysical endeavor can be looked upon not necessarily as a mandate embedded in the Anti-discipline itself, but as a stylistic or conceptual choice made *within* (My italics.) the engagement with Pataphysical method. This is, however, not to imply that such a choice is arbitrary or without significance.

We must then, in the spirit of a Nagean Pataphysics, look not at the "scientific content" of the discourses which Jarry (in these select but far from exclusive passages) sometimes employs, but examine rather the *mode* of argumentation and rhetoric that characterizes these texts. The model into which Jarry imports or appropriates these scientific discourses is that of Symbolist literature, and a particularly radical mode of Symbolist literature at that; one which dispenses of all logical constraints to unity of place or action, narrative continuity, principles of causality, and consistent characterization. It is a mode where the possibility for disagreement, for alternate conclusions or interpretations, is constantly kept *rhetorically* open. (My italics.) The text does not presuppose or attempt to compel the reader's collusion; in short, it is a textual mode designed to operate on the principle of the clinamen.[12]

The scientific texts of which Jarry makes use, on the other hand, are constructed in such a way as to assume (or rhetorically

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Metaphysics, but in a different direction. It might potentially be dubbed *Paraphysics*. (My italics.)

[12] Since the clinamen must always *be* an exception (My italics.), it might be argued that the scientific discourses grafted into the texts serve, in a paradoxical way, *as* clinamens (clinami?) within the absurdist Anti-structure of the Pataphysical texts.

impel) the reader's participation in an implied univocality through a chain of unchallenged logical arguments leading inexorably to their conclusion; ignoring, at least on a rhetorical level, the spectre of the clinamen. For a characteristic example, we might open Lord Kelvin's "On the Age of the Sun's Heat," from which Jarry draws certain images in *Faustroll's* Ethernity (Jarry 1965, p.275.):

> All things considered, there seems little probability in the hypothesis that solar radiation is at present compensated, to any appreciable degree, by heat generated by meteors falling in [to the sun]; and, as it can be shown that no chemical theory is tenable, it must be concluded as most probable that the sun is at present merely an incandescent liquid mass cooling.[13] (Kelvin, 1900.)

Well, naturally. This example is taken largely at random, and is characteristic of the entire text. It is this kind of inexorable method of rhetorical argument that lends itself most readily to a fruitful superinduction over or under Jarry's Symbolist literary mode.

We might question, however, whether now, 95 years after the publication of *Faustroll,* the scientific discourse is the only one presenting this mode of argument; and, as Bosse-de-Nage implies, we potential Nagean Pataphysicians might well look in the direction of the fields which constitute the very study *o f* (My italics.) (the) text/s, in both the broad and narrow senses of the word/s:

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[13] It would appear that Kelvin had, previously, ascertained not only the sun's heat, but also its gender, as the sun is referred to throughout this work as "he." It should also be noted that Kelvin does not take metaphor lightly; he is careful to note that the Second Law of Thermodynamics should not mislead us into comparing the universe, "to a single finite mechanism, running down like a clock, and stopping forever." Lest we err.

contemporary critical and literary theory. While Post-Structuralist and postmodernist theorists (along with many scientists) may have done away with the concept of a univocal truth that is central to the *content* (My italics.) of Jarry's scientific sources, they have simultaneously taken on the mantle of this method of discourse. Thus in *Speech and Phenomena* we find Derrida, in a beautifully Pataphysical moment, disproving the possibility of God's immortality primarily through grammatical analysis:

> The *I am,* being lived only as an *I am present,* itself presupposes in itself the relationship to presence in general, to being as presence. The appearing of the *I* to itself in the *I am* is thus originally a relation to its own disappearance. Therefore, *I am* originally means *I am mortal. I am immortal* is an impossible preposition. We can go further: as a linguistic statement "I am the one who am" is the admission of a mortal." (Derrida 1991, p. 14.)

Well, naturally. The fact that Derrida implicitly acknowledges a certain alignment with the Sophistic tradition in "Plato's Pharmacy" (Derrida 1991, pp 114-139.) and thus bears, in his methodology, a close relationship with Pataphysics, does not change this aspect of his texts. It is (shall I repeat, dear reader?) the syzygy of these two modes, not their content, that is important, making self-consciousness quite beside the point; and, needless to say (though I do anyway), the same goes with other contemporary theorists whose work bears the implicit or explicit mark of Pataphysical endeavour. Thus, a Nagean Pataphysics might, potentially, take as its favoured (though not exclusive) field of Pataphysical intervention the realm of critical theory.

And so we are decided. (Are we not?) The question still

remains, specifically *what* the Anti-practical application of such a textually focused Pataphysics must look like. But first (have patience!) we should ask ourselves whether this application of incongruous (though not in-congruent) models of discourse represents the full range of issues at stake in any ('/")Pataphysics, Nagean or otherwise, with two, one, or no apostrophe (O, the apostrophe...!) Can Pataphysics be so easily nailed down? Let us return, for a moment, to Jarry. At what points in *Faustroll* does Pataphysics come into play? There is no clear answer. We have, of course, the "Elements of Pataphysics" in *Faustroll,* of which Panmuphle reads several pages, and which is presented as a discreet text *from* (My italics.) the action of the story. But Faustroll also expounds famously on Pataphysics in several places within the action, notably in Ethernity, where he performs experiments relating to various scientific and mathematical texts, discusses (via Kelvin) the temperature of the sun, and computes the surface of God. (Jarry 1965, 246-256.) Such passages, along with his explanation of the buoyancy of his sieve boat, are clearly the primary inspiration of the scientific and mathematical emphases of later Pataphysical enterprises. A part of Faustroll's discussion concerning the surface of God runs as follows:

> God is, by definition, without dimension; it is permissible, however, for the clarity of our exposition, and though he possesses no dimensions, to endow him with any number of them greater than zero, if these dimensions vanish on both sides of our identities[14]

[14] Note that the reason that, "it is permissible… though he possesses no dimensions, to endow him with any number," is never made clear; the rhetorical coding that inheres in the text itself impels us to accept as

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> Symbolically God is signified by a triangle, but the three Persons should not be regarded as being either its angles or its sides. They are *the three apexes* of another equilateral triangle circumscribed around the traditional one...[15] (Jarry's italics!) (ibid, p.254.)

But can we then ignore other passages where the same method is applied to other discourses? The most beloved of these latter to the Nagean Pataphysician would of course be *Faustroll's* Chapter 29, "Concerning Some Further and More Evident Meanings of the Words 'Ha Ha'." Let us compare the rhetorical aspects of the last passage, as well as the passage from Derrida, to this (having explained that the "h" should be removed since it was not written in ancient languages- a nod, perhaps, to Bosse-de-Nage's evolutionary state). This chapter also contains a number of points close to the heart of a Nagean Pataphysics, which I shall let the reader ponder without comment:

> A juxtaposed to A, with the former obviously equal to the latter, is the formula for the principle of identity: a thing is itself. It is at the same time the most excellent refutation of this very proposition, since two A's differ in space, when we write them, if not indeed in time, just as two twins are never born together.
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> [...]
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> Pronounced quickly enough, until the letters become confounded, it is the idea of unity.
> Pronounced slowly, it is the idea of duality, of echo, of distance, of symmetry, of greatness and duration, of the two principles of good and evil. (ibid, pp 228-229.)

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logic what is in fact a juxtaposition of clauses syntactically managed in such a way as to imply a non-existent logical connection between them.

[15] Note also that this prologue to the mathematical formulation of God is explicitly founded upon a *symbol* and *signification*. (My italics.)

We find (I say) that we are impelled to recognize the latter as a Pataphysical exercise, its rhetorical technique being extremely similar with only the substitution of a linguistic for a scientific argot; we will note, too, that a mysticalreligious overtone has been superimposed over elements of both passages.

But already the slope is becoming slippery. What, then, of Faustroll's conjectural explanation, in conversation with the Marine Bishop Mendacious, of why the sight of a severed horse-head drives him to murder? (ibid, pp 224-226.) While the method of Anti-logical reasoning remains quite similar, we are now firmly within the action of the story and there is no overtly scientific, mathematic, *or* (My italics.) linguistic argot involved. And what, then, of the incursions of scientific or mathematical argot into the *narration* (My italics.) of the work- that is, the very *literary technique* itself? (My italics.) For instance, Faustroll is described by the narrator (and *not* [My italics.] by Panmuphle, who narrates only the middle section of the book) as being "of medium height, or, to be absolutely accurate, of ($8 \times 10^{10} + 10^9 + 4 \times 10^8 + 5 \times 10^6$) atomic diameters". (ibid, pp 182-183.) In short, we soon find that there is no clear delineation between Pataphysics as presented *within* the action of the book (My italics.) and Pataphysics as presented *through* the technique and stylistic methodology of the text itself.

The conclusion that the (potential) Nagean Pataphysician draws is that since Pataphysics is a method, not a circumscribed[16] *theory* (My italics.), all that we can gather as evidence are the various applications and effects of the method; we must pick up the

[16] Though it might itself circumscribe, being, in its very (metaphorical) nature, circular...

pieces left in the wake of Pataphysics' rampage and from them reconstruct the beast itself (which, being, potentially, Pataphysicians, we must then inhabit and finally become). These pieces may exist on the rhetorical, the narrative, the stylistic, or the lettristic levels, or on all or several simultaneously. Pataphysics, in one sense, does not exist; it is a nothing that disturbs and transfigures what is. Baudrillard is keenly aware of this aspect of Pataphysics; his conception of the Anti-discipline is ultimately gaseous, nebulous. "Pataphysics: philosophy of the gaseous state. It can only define itself as a new, undiscovered language because it is too obvious: tautology. Even better: it can only be explained by its own term, thus: it does not exist. It revolves around itself and ruminates the diarrheic incongruence, unsmilingly, mushrooms and rotting dreams."[17] (Baudrillard 2005, p. 214.) Baudrillard here has hit upon a central point- the *ungroundedness* (My italics.) of Pataphysical discourse. The best case in point is the Pataphysical discourse around Pataphysics itself. The Canadian Jarryites, in particular, have worked consistently with "pataphysical methods for years and have explored the nature and implications of the Anti-discipline in a number of publications, Bök even in a 133 page book.[18] Yet as has been pointed out above, there is very little information given in Jarry upon which to found this discourse; the

[17] In this piece, Baudrillard also mimics the way in which (as described below) the various descriptions and definitions of Pataphysics are given variously, multivocally, in poetic terms that create not so much a picture of Pataphysics as a matrix of textual material in which it can exist, or be born.

[18] This count includes the index, but not the covers, acknowledgments, contents page, title page, bibliographic information, list of other books published in the same series, or the blurb on Bök at the end of the book.

only remotely straightforward definitions of the Anti-discipline are given in the single chapter of the "Elements of Pataphysics," and even here we find seven or eight definitions (depending on how one arbitrarily cuts them out from a fully woven text), two of which are authoritatively marked: "Definition," and all of which, while not precisely contradictory, seem to shoot out in different directions at once. (Jarry 1965, pp 192-194.) Canadian "pataphysics represents (as all ['/"]Pataphysics must) a great deal of criticism ostensibly drawn from, and expended upon, a very vague and nebulous groundwork. The Toronto Research Group, in its "Introduction to Canadian "Pataphysics," explains that their brand of 'pataphysics is in fact, "Not 'Pata-physics but rather "Pata-physics[19]... from elision (') to quotation (") through a superinducement on elision ('+' = "). Within the ordinarities of elision the apostrophe places 'pataphysics outside the domain of the Origin."[20] (McCaffery/Nichols 1992, p. 301.) In McCaffery's *Zarathustran 'Pataphysics*, he quotes *Faustroll* only via Roger Shattuck, one of 'Pataphysics' most influential early interpreters, rather than going to the book itself. (McCaffery 2001, p. 17.) In one sense, an instance of *direct* reference to Jarry (My italics.) might take the form of a clinamen, a swerving in toward the

[19] Notice that the TRG here employs the textual aspect of Pataphysics, through the addition of a hyphen, to signal their concentration on the scientific ("-physics") aspect of "pataphysics.

[20] In the "Elements of Pataphysics" it is stated that properly speaking, an apostrophe ought to be added to the beginning of the word, "so as to avoid a simple pun." (Jarry 1965, p. 192.) Accordingly some strains of Pataphysical thought have employed this apostrophe in their use of the word, though it does not appear thus anywhere else in Jarry. The TRG is playing upon this tradition. A Nagean Pataphysics, reveling as it does in the syzygy clinamen that the pun represents in our potential textual Pataphysics, dispenses with the apostrophe in order to save the pun.

~~origin~~ or centre of the larger Pataphysical discourse.

Because of this, any discourse on Pataphysics must be inherently selective about what evidence it draws from these texts or, in fact, any of the later texts written upon the subject. The contradictory nature of Jarry's and, consequently, later Pataphysicians' statements on the subject destroy any chance of even a *semblance* (My italics.) of consistency unless the evidence presented, and the interpretation superinduced upon it, is highly selective. In order to gather material, *you must FIRST* (My italics.) *know what conclusion you are after*. It is only natural then that a potential Nagean Pataphysics would expand this strategy, embedded as a necessity within the various texts of Pataphysical discourse, and make it one of our most valued stratagems in our potential repertoire. If science and metaphysics gather or produce evidence or postulates to arrive at a conclusion, we must *begin* (My italics.) with a conclusion in order to arrive at evidence.

Throughout *Faustroll,* we can see our Anti-paradigm Bosse-de-Nage hard at work on this project - not through his own investigations like Faustroll, but rather through constantly forcing those around him (especially the sometime narrator, Panmuphle) to employ this Pataphysical method constantly in their interactions *with him*.[21] (My italics.) "Ha Ha," says Bosse-de-Nage; and while it is entirely possible that this phrase signifies (like Dada) nothing, merely a desperate laugh at the universe of alien text closing in around him (Faustroll, in Jarry 1965, p. 245 defines the universe as, "that which is the exception to oneself"), nonetheless those around

[21] A clue as to how a potential Nagean Pataphysician might *live* (My italics.) Pataphysically…

him are forced to speculate as to the meaning of this enigmatic utterance. And so we find *rationalizations* (My italics.) attached to each instance of this incantation, marking a constant rhythm throughout the text, in various passages:

> "Ha ha," he said in French, and added nothing more."
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> "Ha ha!" said Bosse-de-Nage as he deposited the skiff upon the pavement; but on this occasion he added nothing to his statement.
>
> "Ha ha!" said Bosse-de-Nage, waking up suddenly; then he relapsed into obstinate silence.
>
> Bosse-de-Nage, as far as I could judge, understood these prodigies very little.
>
> "Ha ha," he said succinctly; and he did not lose himself in further considerations.
>
> "Ha ha!!" said Bosse-de-Nage, without further commentary.
>
> "Ha ha!" he growled, to express his fury, but he remembered his solemn oath.
>
> "Ha! Ha!" he said, but we did not listen to the rest of his speech.
>
> "Ha ha!" he said; but his state of fright, no doubt, made him break off at that point.
>
> "Ha ha!" stammered the *papio;* (Nagean italics.) but the impact of a steel cylindrocone against his left zygomatic apophysis made short work of his third word.

Faustroll remained impassive and Bosse-de-Nage, inordinately interested, forgot himself as far as to think visibly:

"Ha ha!" But he said not a word, for fear of outrunning his thoughts.

"Ha, ha," began Bosse-de-Nage, wanting to try out his voice before joining in the musical refrain;

Bosse-de-Nage thought the time had come to bring matters to a point:

"Ha ha!" he declared in summary fashion, but he saw that we had guessed his thoughts, and watched in great surprise the simplicity of his Belgian hat roll upon the carpet with the recalcitrant din of an iron sweep's brush.

"Ha ha," meditated Bosse-de-Nage, but he did not develop his ideas more comprehensively.

"Ha ha!" interjected Bosse-de-Nage by way of digression, but he could find no valid objection.

"Ha ha!" exclaimed Bosse-de-Nage appropriately; but the Bishop Mendacious interrupted him

…giving them graciously to Bosse-de-Nage to carry, the latter thanking him with the single word:

"ha ha," for, as one knows, *he was opposed to all idle verbiage* (My italics.)

Bosse-de-Nage… when the doctor had relaxed the grip of his fingers, said in two words:

"Ha ha!" and these were the last two words he uttered.

"HA HA," he said concisely; but we are in no way concerned with the accidental fact that he usually added nothing more.

the spectre of Bosse-de-Nage- who, having only existed imaginarily, could not really die- manifested itself, said "ha ha" respectfully, then was silent, waiting orders.

"Ha ha," said Bosse-de-Nage to show that he understood, and prepared to depart.

"Ha ha," agreed Bosse-de-Nage wholeheartedly, and his hurried exit carried with it the most ardent protestations of zeal.[22]

Whether or not "Ha ha!" signifies anything, it is a catalyst that *creates* (My italics.) signification. "Ha ha!" acts like a vacuum, forcing conclusions from those surrounding it, and pulling them into it. The reasons and explanations that others create for it circle around this empty phrase but never penetrate it; it is an origin which is cut off, or better: an Anti-origin that has little relation to the ideas circling it, but which provide*s* a *centre* (My italics.) around which they can orbit. And, it is important to note, "Ha ha!" the eternal empty phrase, changes in significance in each situation, it is ethereal, unformed; it is a constant potential for a new rationalization, a new signification. The *significance* (My italics.) of "Ha! Ha!" is that its *significance* (My italics.) can be constructed

[22] Bosse-de-Nage's exclamation "Ha ha!" appears in *Faustroll* 21 times. This is exactly half of the number of quotes from Plato given by Jarry in chapter 10 in illustration of the function Bosse-de-Nage's interjections were to serve within the structure of the text. (Jarry 1965, pp 197-198.) Could this be because he is only half-way toward being (fictional) Man?

only *after* (My italics.) the utterance itself. In this way it sets itself up against the first principle of Metaphysics. Such might be a potential Nagean Pataphysics.

All of these quotations, naturally, are from *Faustroll,* as have been all of the various definitions and descriptions so far, in addition to all of the narrative and stylistic investigations yet presented. After all, it has become a truism that the *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician,* is the paradigmatic[23] Pataphysical text. However, Pataphysics has a history going back far beyond *Faustroll*. A few years after Jarry left school (placing it in the mid-1890s), he announced plans to publish a projected *Treatise on Pataphysics,* and though this never came to pass, the ideas of Pataphysics run through his entire body of work prior to *Faustroll*. (Jarry 1965, p. 14.) These earlier instances of Pataphysics and Pataphysical ideas often bear a markedly different character than the version of Pataphysics given in *Faustroll*, one often enmeshed even more inextricably with literary voice and technique itself. (Do not fear, dear reader, you will presently learn the Anti-logic behind the three page digression to come.)

One of the earliest texts to name Pataphysics is the essay "Visions of Present and Future," of 1894. (Jarry 1965, pp 109-113.) This absurd, ostensibly meandering reflection on the state of modern society and the unimaginative way that we moderns approach our world becomes gradually less linear in its language, structure, and sense, and ends with its own definition of Pataphysics, marking it as perhaps Jarry's first concentrated effort to

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[23] Or should we say "patadigmatic?"

describenact it. Here, Jarry does indeed employ scientific and mathematic argot, but does not employ scientific argumentation, instead insisting upon a poeticization of scientific artifacts and data, directed in turn toward an Anti-pragmatic end. He opines, "wouldn't it have been a good idea to enlarge Onocrotals' wind pipes in order to blow up air mattresses?" In the section, "About the Physick-Stick" we find:

> The circle, being finite in itself, falls into obsolescence. The straight line, infinite in both directions, replaces it. *Don't jump around so,* demi-cubist creature, on each pole of your axis and id. Any rider enrages you (mounted on the coupling between your ribs- for a few more centuries we'll leave the disc for men to use in appliances) (Jarry's Italics.)[24] (ibid, p. 111.)

While we find the logico-mathematical *argot* (My italics.) employed here in such a way as to sound quite technical ("The circle, finite in itself…" etc.), this argot is soon related to speculative psychoanalytic argot ("your axis and id"), and runs without delineation into the rest of the text's rhetorically and linguistically hallucinatory prose ("mounted on the coupling between the ribs…"). The scientific and mathematical argot is used here as a stylistic employment within a text structured and filled out according to a militantly "poetic" model, rather than as a major factor in structuring the rhetorical nature of the piece itself.[25] It is, in essence, a stylistic *choice* (My italics again.), however informed.

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[24] Though I assure you, dear reader, that had not Jarry had a 112 year jump on me, I should have added these italics myself.

[25] It is, one might say, a clinamen swerving away from the usual language of Symbolist prose.

Even more to the point, this passage is interrupted twice by the (already) italicized interjection, *"Don't jump around so!"* (Remember, these are Jarry's italics.) This interjection derives verbatim from the Comte de Lautreamont's 1869 text *The Songs of Maldoror,* where it is spoken by a hair of God left in a brothel. Not only this, but it is employed structurally in the same way; the phrase is repeated throughout the chapter, and such recurrences of phrases interjected into the prose like irregular refrains is a favourite technique of Lautreamont. This literal *and* (My italics.) structural quotation is an important clue, coming, as it does, in an essay that seems to be at heart a meditation upon, or even the public unveiling of, the Anti-discipline itself. Might Jarry be pointing toward a subterranean Protopataphysics imbedded in the Decadent and Symbolist tradition/s? Either way, we must investigate this link briefly, if only in a supplementary way.

We will find immediately that the literary mode employed here by Jarry, which is still dominant, in modulated forms, throughout his work, including *Faustroll*, is hugely indebted to Lautreamont. Let us ask, then, the thoughts of Lautreamont upon logic and mathematics:

> In ancient and in modern times more than one man of great imagination has been awe-struck by the contemplation of your symbolic figures traced on paper, like so many mysterious signs, living and breathing in hidden ways not understood by the profane multitudes; these signs were only the glittering revelations of eternal axioms and hieroglyphs, which existed before the universe and will remain after the universe has passed away. (Lautreamont 1869, p. 93.)

The attitude toward mathematics expressed here- one which

concentrates not on its analytical or "objective" aspects but on its symbolic character (which, of course, brings it quite close to the idea of writing) is also typical of Jarry, especially in the early canon. But a page later, after continuing to sing its praises, Lautreamont continues:

> Without you in my struggle against man I would perhaps have been defeated [. . .]
> You gave me the coldness of your sublime conceptions, free of all passion.
> [. . .]
> You gave me the dogged prudence which can be deciphered at every step of your admirable methods of analysis, synthesis and deduction. I used it to outdo the pernicious wiles of my mortal enemy and to attack him skillfully in turn, plunging into his entrails a sharp dagger which will forever remain buried in his body…" (Lautreamont 1869, p. 95.)

Maldoror's "mortal enemy" is, of course, God himself.

While Jarry does not villainize mathematics in this way, the earlier Pataphysical canon, especially in his 1895 play *Caesar Antichrist* (which is referred to as a Pataphysical text in chapter 39 of *Faustroll,* the chapter bearing the closest resemblance to these earlier works, especially to *Caesar Antichrist*) reflects this moral investment in mathematical symbology. Furthermore, this *very phrase* from Lautreamont (My italics.) appears also in *Caesar Antichrist* itself. (Jarry 1992, p. 53.) This play employs thickly studded, opaque symbolism drawn from early Christian, alchemical, mathematical, and heraldic symbology in the service of an apocalyptic theme and voice. It must be noted too that the main body of *Faustroll* ends on an apocalyptic note, complete with the four horses, "bearing the sign of death, treading awkwardly with

their hooves." (Jarry 1965, p. 244.) Thus the themes of visionary (to use the term Jarry provides for us in the title of the essay) symbolic occultism and apocalypse remain central to Jarry's Pataphysics, albeit manifested variously in different works; and the two views of mathematics given by Lautreamont and pointed toward by Jarry are themselves being reconciled through superinducement in the enactment of the various Pataphysical methods.[26]

Before leaving for good "Visions of Present and Future," let us compare the various (Anti-)definitions from *Faustroll* which have appeared above to that given at the end of "Visions of Present and Future"*:*

> Close this book now with its autumnal cover, for we shall let it go at that for today. –Pataphysics is the science of these present or future beings and devices, along with the power to use them *(disciplus)* . . . –Definition of revealed science before venturing out into the ineffable mysteries . . . –*Disc.* – The mind desires that what has been revealed should be known by the most ignorant, even by the knight who complains that, in order to protect it from the emery of his gluttonous violet teeth, Your living statue of lustrous ebony and adamantine emerald has been mercifully padded, as well as the coral-red pustules of the triangular God of Gardens.[27](Jarry's italics and ellipses.) (Jarry 1965, p. 113.)

We find here, despite the doubled "science," that most of the

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[26] Note that the detour through Lautreamont, though perhaps not strictly necessary on mere argumentative grounds, presents us with a slight, unpredictable swerve from the direct path of the essay's thrust. McCaffery claims that the clinamen, "with Dionysian inconsistency declares itself a differentiating affirmation enacted without intention." (McCaffery 2001, p. 22.)

[27] Note that the frequent references to religious subjects both directly in the text and indirectly through Lautreamont (and in many other proclamations relating to Pataphysics) relate equally closely to the later comparison of Pataphysics to *Meta*physics as to the later growing emphasis on scientific argumentative/rhetorical modes.

"definition" consists in stridently non-linear, non-logical poetic *image*. (My italics.) The definition is at least half "textual" as opposed to significatory.

In the chapter of 1897's *Days and Nights* (Jarry 1965, pp 144-146.) entitled "Pataphysics," the relationship between the Anti-discipline of the title and the text itself is entirely indirect. There is only one paragraph utilizing mathematic models, which the subject of the text, Sengle, uses to regulate his day. However, there are indirect clues toward potential Pataphysical techniques; Sengle simply needs to, "rely on the benevolent return of the Externals which would jolt him and trap him in a series of dilemmas, until he emerged, via the inner stairway of salt, at the summit of the pyramid. And that had never failed him yet." And he reflects upon, "perfecting the Leibnizian definition, that perception is a true hallucination, he saw no reason why one should not say: hallucination is a false perception, or more exactly: a *weak* one." (Not my italics.) (p. 145.) It is also telling that C.V. Boys' 1890 essay *Soap Bubbles and the Forces Which Mould Them,* which formed the (Anti-)scientific basis for chapter 6 of *Faustroll,* (Jarry 1965, p. 259) was *first* used by Jarry (My italics.) in *Caesar Antichrist.* While this chapter in *Faustroll* is among the most scientifically-inflected in its voice and rhetorical structure, it is employed thus in the earlier work: "Let men not stare with their eyes stretched wide, abandoning their cremasters: the stupidity of these theories is as old as Ormutz and Ahriman. Man is the line along which we two crush each other, the null plane where two twin soap bubbles embrace." (Jarry 1992, pp 36-37.) There are (shall I reiterate?) many ways, many degrees,

and many registers on which the superimposition of discourses can take place.

Why have I told you all this? Because (to answer the question I have compelled you to ask) these earlier Pataphysical texts (and, in passing, I must remind you that the distinction between a Pataphysical and non-pataphysical text or idea is anything but clear) are hardly ever mentioned in later Pataphysical discourse; they are decidedly *supplementary*. And, furthermore, *they represent an earlier stage of evolution of the idea and methodology of Pataphysics,* (My italics, all mine.) a stage (or series of stages) which, due to their/its more scattered nature (which can only be approached selectively) and even-less defined, nebulous, one might almost say gaseous form, has/ve been subordinated to *Faustroll,* which is to say, Faustroll. Thus we discover that Bosse-de-Nage, who is *also* (My italics.) a creature more intimately of the text than Faustroll/*Faustroll;* who is *also* (My italics) an earlier, less defined *form* of Faustroll*Faustroll;* (My italics.)[28] and who is *also* (My italics.) in the decidedly *supplementary* role (My italics.) - bears in fact a *metaphorical relationship* (My italics.) with this earlier canon of Pataphysical texts. Thus a potential Nagean Pataphysics must operate in sensitive relation to this canon and with the more closely-woven relationship with textuality around which it hovers. And so we have come full circle.

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[28] Only "form" is represented in, strictly speaking, my italics; "*Faustroll"* (that is, the second instance of it in the clause referred to) is, as mentioned in a much earlier note, italicized according to common academic usage as signifying the title (here, partial or familiarized) of a book; though juxtaposed against the unitalicized and thus, implicitly, personal name of Dr. Faustroll itself, this italicization may have other effects in excess of this simple signification.

Metaphor in this instance is hinged, as it were, through one of its terms (the figure of Bosse-de-Nage) to a certain type of metonymy- a metonymy who's action of displacement is articulated in evolutionary terms, in the relationship between that same figure (Bosse-de-Nage) and a third term, the figure of Dr. Faustroll. Thus the metonym, conceived by Jakobson as a function of (at least relative) contiguity, (Bradford 1994, pp 9-23.) is linked through the figure of Bosse-de-Nage with the displacing (and at least partially effacing) function of metaphor.[29] This (in turn) might be metaphorically (or symbolically) compared to Jarry's emphasis, especially (but far from exclusively) in the earlier Pataphysical canon, on the synthesis of opposites. In *Caesar Antichrist,* we read:

> The pataphysician, axiom and principle of the identity of opposites, clamped onto your ears, and you, flying fish, to your retractable wings, is the dwarf atop the giant, beyond metaphysics; he is, through you, the Antichrist and God as well, horse of the Spirit, Minus-in-Plus, Less-which-is-More, kinematics of the zero left in our eyes, polyhedric infinity.
> (Jarry 1992, p. 55.)

In one sense, the metonym represents the continuity of *presence* (My italics.) as the vehicle for the semantic transference posited (at least rhetorically) by such a figurative maneuvre ("the plus"), while the metaphor or the symbol, which replaces the first term not by an extension or part of that term, but rather by its determined *Other* (My italics.), operates on the principle of

[29] Note also that Bosse-de-Nage's *metaphorical* (My italics.) relationship with the earlier canon is one dispersed widely through isolated parts of scattered texts, while his metonymic relationship with Faustroll is articulated *within* (My Italics.) a single, bounded text within whose bounds both can be said to "exist."

Derrida's "trace," the principle of the incursion of disappearance or non-presence *into* presence ("the minus"). (My italics.) (Derrida 1991, pp 26-27 as well as the passage quoted earlier in this piece.) The vehicle of the posited transference is the *vacuum* (My italics.) produced by this displacement.[30] And so in the passage from the earlier canon to the "final" version of Pataphysics as presented by Jarry, we find also a passage from figurative signification based in the principle of displacement or disappearance ("the minus") to a figurative signification based in the principle of continuity or presence ("the plus"), which find their point of tangency in the single figure of Bosse-de-Nage, functioning simultaneously as plus-and-minus, plus-in-minus, which is (for what it's worth) Jarry's conception of the Antichrist himself.[31] [32]

We must also, in our zeal, repeat that the metonymic enactment is articulated in evolutionary terms; and that, while Bosse-de-Nage's relationship with the texts "~~for which~~" he ~~is~~ a figure *is* metaphorical (My italics.) - that is, he shares with them common traits, but is not a simple "consequence" of them - this metaphoricity is largely embedded in *themes* of evolution (My italics) providing a kind of subterranean link between the two figurative relationships which is, none-the-less, not *itself* (My italics.) a figurative relationship, but a thematic one. The theme of

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[30] Compare this to the significatory vaccuum of "Ha ha!"- Bosse-de-Nage's (nearly) sole utterance can be seen as a figure for metaphor itself.

[31] Compare this conclusion with Jarry's (chronologically) last Pataphysical operation, which ends with proving mathematically that "God is the tangential point between Zero and Infinity." (Jarry 1965, p. 256.)

[32] Both the preceding paragraph and the preceding footnote shed an additional light upon the significance to Jarry of mathematical systems within the broader field of Pataphysical thought.

supplementarity could be argued to function similarly, as a way to bypass (by means of a subtle rhetorico-textual clinamen) the mechanizations of simple signification (though not of signifying processes as such).

Since Derrida has been so kind as to posthumously lend to this piece several of his ideas already, let us swerve a bit to explore farther, though not *too* much farther (for this would constitute, were it to be more fully expanded upon, a piece in itself) his relationship to such a potential Nagean Pataphysics. McCaffery has already pointed out that the Pataphysical notion of the clinamen, "inheres directly in Derrida's notion of iterability and the *force de rupture* virtual in any written sign… for any sign when placed between quotation marks 'can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts.'" (These were not my italics.) (McCaffery 2001, p. 19.) While this has certain implications for a Nagean methodology when considering the inherently selective process in Pataphysical critical writing, or more correctly, for the later assimilation of the selected evidence or material, it is not entirely to the point of the emerging concerns of the more primativist *Nagean* Anti-school. (My italics.)

Capitalizing on our fortuitous discovery of the investment, in the figure of Bosse-de-Nage, of the functions of metaphoricity and metonymy, and their relationships to the consistent Jarrynagean theme of the meeting of opposites, of reversal, let us reflect briefly on Derrida's statement that, in order to write in the wake of deconstruction, "It is not therefore a matter of inverting the literal meaning and the figurative meaning but of determining the 'literal'

meaning of writing as metaphoricity itself." (Derrida 1991, p. 32.) The conclusion is inevitable that metaphoricity must be intensely engaged with not only thematically, but methodologically by any potential Nagean Pataphysics. But as Derrida here suggests, *and* (My italics.) as the consistent articulation of Pataphysics not only within semi-discreet operations, axioms and demonstrations but *also* (My italics.) within the structure and technique of texts themselves also suggest, this engagement cannot take the form of a simple reversal of the terms involved, or of the direction of the semantic exchange posited between them. The vacuum at the heart of metaphorical exchange, for one, makes this an impossibility; there can be no simple reversal of metaphorical exchange because metaphor represents *not* an exchange, (My italics.) but a displacement which (as the Symbolists realized and activated) inevitably and irreversibly obscures or annihilates the "originary" term.[33] We find that we must redefine metaphor in relation to a potential Nagean Pataphysics; and, the text being by its nature iterable and always already a trace (or network of traces), (ibid.) a state excluding final definition, we find ourselves (inevitably) unable to articulate such a notion of metaphor except *through* the enactment of iterability, in individual applications to discreet situations. A complete exploration of such a potential notion is a task beyond the scope of the present piece.[34] And besides, in

[33] In a supplementary footnote in his "Rhetoric of the Image," Barthes notes that, "if metonymy by its *origin* is a figure of contiguity, it nevertheless functions *finally* as a substitute for the signifier, that is as a metaphor." (Barthes 1977, p. 50.) (My italics; why not?)

[34] We might provisionally designate such a concept of the metaphor (which would extend beyond metaphor as much as the latter extends beyond physiphor [which, provisionally, might be termed 'signifier']) a

accordance with the Anti-postulate given at the end of the last full paragraph of page 9 of the present text, we can only postulate such a methodology, and the Anti-conception of metaphor upon which it is grounded, *after* (My italics) having acted upon such a postulate. But we can look, by way of example, at the various stylistic and technical employments of Jarry in Pataphysical texts (however identified as such) as well as, particularly, his (metaphorical) "living-inside" (another) metaphor in the adventure with the lettuce-leaf discussed above. We might also look, in addition to Derrida's disproval of God's immortality also given above, to his "Tympan," where (after referring within the same paragraph to both Lautreamont and the "luminous triangle," and the "grandiose trinity," [Derrida 1991, p. 152.] favourite images of Jarry) he proceeds to examine the closure of discursive systems through "opening up" an initial metaphor of the tympanum of the ear. This metaphor is not used as an (ostensible) tool in either the transmission or frustration of ideas; rather it is employed as a framework which becomes, at certain points, increasingly self-referential, the implications on the ostensible ("non-metaphorical") "subject" of the essay becoming secondary to the elaboration of the metaphor itself; its referential quality becomes half-beside the point. Derrida, for instance, asks (metaphorically), "In order effectively, practically to transform what one decries (tympanizes), must one still be heard and understood within it, henceforth subjecting oneself to the law of the inner hammer?" He then opens the metaphor up, strolls inside like Faustroll on the lettuce-leaf, in a supplementary footnote:

"pataphor."

> The hammer, as is well known, belongs to the chain of small bones, along with the anvil and stirrup. It is placed on the *internal* surface of the tympanic membrane. It always has the role of mediation and communication: it transmits sonic vibrations to the chain of small bones and then to the inner ear. Bichat recognized that it has another paradoxical function. This small bone protects the tympanum while acting upon it. "Without it, the tympanum would be affected painfully by vibrations set up by too powerful sounds." The hammer, thus, can weaken the blows, muffle them on the threshold of the inner ear. The latter- the labyrinth- includes a *vestibule*, the *semicircular canals*, a *cochlea* (with its two *spirals*), that is, two organs of balance and one organ of hearing. Perhaps we will penetrate it more deeply later. (Derrida's italics, though I might have italicized the last word myself, had he not done it first) (Derrida 1991, p. 152.)

This is a particularly condensed instance of the methodology through which the body of the work operates. We can see that through the privileging given the metaphor in this passage, the rhetorical and verbal detail expended (both in semantic focus and in verbal and syntactic weight), the figure's status as metaphor is partially eroded, as the slight incursions of the figure's supposed referent, alluded to implicitly through subtle syntactic maneuvres rather than stated explicitly, begin to act as modifiers *of* the metaphor (My italics.) rather than vice-versa.[35] The direction of

[35] To return to him once again, this technique is a favourite of Lautreamont; in fact it is through such a maneuvre that *Maldoror* famously opens in its first chapter: "like the eyes of a son respectfully averted from the august contemplation of his mother's face; or rather like a formation of very meditative cranes, stretching out of sight, whose sensitive bodies flee the chill of winter, when, their wings fully extended, they fly powerfully through silence to a precise point on the horizon, from which suddenly a strange strong wind blows, precursor of the storm. The oldest crane, flying on alone in front of the others…" and so on (brilliantly) for 173 words in 23 clauses, organized in turn into

symbolic exchange is, then, being in some sense reversed, but it is in no way a simple one-to-one reversal; rather, it is an implicit questioning of the priorities of both rhetorical argument and of symbolic exchange itself.[36] [37]

Nonetheless the concept of metaphor posits a figure composed of (at least) two terms which, in some sense, co-exist; and even if one term exists only as a rhetorical function within the figure rather than as a material or idealized *signified* in the classic sense, this rhetorical or hypothesized originary term nonetheless casts its shadow, and in this sense represents another kind of syzygy, a syzygy on the level of the metaphor wherein the non-presence of the displaced term superimposes itself over, behind, or around the edges of the displacing term. We can go further- in the injunction that Pataphysics will "explain the universe supplementary to this one; or, less ambitiously, will describe a universe which can be - perhaps should be - envisaged in the place of the traditional one," we can now see that Jarry is calling for an expansion of this metaphorical and linguistic play, a superimposition of this principle and process onto the framework of *"reality" itself*. (My italics.) One supplementary "universe" such as those described by Jarry is that of the trace itelf, of the non-being or

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two sentences, including three sets of parentheses.

[36] One might, additionally, be reminded of Jarry's injunction that Pataphysics, "attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments."

[37] A similar non-exchangability is at stake in the Pataphysical syzygy of logical modes; the non-exchangability of theological and mathematical logical models is what allows the Pataphysical conclusion that ends *Faustroll*. (Jarry 1965, 254-256.) The *non*exchangability (My italics.) of various levels of rhetoric and signification is activated by Pataphysics as a condition of creative force.

erasure that is the necessary supplement to the world of being, "the traditional one." A Nagean Pataphysics might make a gesture toward reversing, to some degree and in some way, this supplementarity of the trace. Thus a pataphysical discourse in its entirety both signifies and deflects signification. It is a metatrope or figure of metaphor itself; and furthermore, it attempts to bring about a reversal of metaphor on both the limited level *and* the larger, meta-tropical (or pataphorical) level. (My italics.) And the key thing to recognize in relation to a potential Nagean Pataphysics- one whose heritage includes not only scientific and mathematic elements but also literary, religious, hermetic, iconographic, philosophical, and apocalyptic elements—is this: We can see through the arguments we have followed so far, and confirm by the Jarrian injunction that Pataphysics, "symbolically attributes the properties of objects, described by their virtuality, to their lineaments," (Jarry 1965, p.193.) that a potential Nagean Pataphysics will *treat the world as a metaphor*, which in turn can itself be opened up or turned *inside out*. (My italics, both sets.)

Let us continue - if the imaginary is defined as that which *is not* real, (My italics.) it represents that which is supplementary to reality, and is the *absence* of reality (My italics.) which in turn *defines* reality (which is, in turn, defined as that which is not imaginary). (My italics- I didn't forget.) Therefore, the pataphysical privileging of the supplement of absence is, at the same time, not only the privileging of the imaginary in relation to the real, but the way for a potential Nagean Pataphysics to act as a "science of imaginary solutions." We must, however, take pause—for here we

see that although a Nagean Pataphysics might deal with imaginary *answers* (My italics.), these answers are the necessary counterparts to *real* questions. (My italics.) In the passage from question to answer, the issue being dealt with is transfigured by the Pataphysical treatment, and the imaginary/absence resides visually, is figured (as a presence) within the (present) text. Perhaps more importantly, the correspondence between these two sets of terms - imaginary/real and absence/presence- reveals the extratextual implications that Jarry obviously saw in Pataphysics: it is a weapon that the imaginary can use against the real, and a tool for creating potential out of the apparent impasse posed by iterability itself.

If then, the world is to be approached as a metaphor- a system of two terms, one of which is both defined and transmitted by its own absence- it follows that within the text, the metaphor and (by [metonymic] extension) figures such as Bosse-de-Nage (who is simply a metaphor granted a semblance of volition and self-awareness, that is to say, individuation- that is to say [further], opened up or figured as an absent term [or set of terms] manifested as *a presence* [My italics.]) must be approached as worlds themselves; metaphoricity, as Derrida has pointed out at the bottom of page 14 in this essay, must be (Anti-)determined as the "literal" meaning of writing itself.[38]

[38] It might be further argued that writing, at least insofar as it is "figurative" or implicitly refers to "the world" through recourse to ideas of communication or narrative, represents an absent extra-textual world through the medium of words, which *are* words (My italics.) only because they are *not* things-in-themselves (i.e., the world). Thus a story or discursive text is itself a kind of giant metaphor. If, as we have concluded, the world is to be approached as metaphor, then it is a metaphor comprised of a great many other metaphors - it must, we conclude, be approached as a *narrative or discursive text.* (My italics.)

Do not think, dear reader, that I am bringing this phrase back into the text in a slip-shod or casual manner. The motif of formal and thematic recurrence that characterizes this text, and of which this particular recurrence is an instance, corresponds to the recurrent image of circularity to be found throughout Jarry's work. True, thanks to the work of the clinamen, a circle is never perfect. Therefore, McCaffery points out, "repetition carries difference over sameness, precipitating the inclination of the circle into the spiral. Jarry's 'pataphysically inspired decal of this great Nietzschean concept is the huge *gidouille,* or grotesque spiral, on the belly of Ubu, which Faustroll explains is the 'symbol of ethernal consciousness circling forever around itself' (in Shattuck 1960, 29)." (McCaffery's italics.) (McCaffery 2001, pp 22-23.) The spiral and the ellipse, as well as the circle, are constant images and themes in Jarry's writing connected to Pataphysics. Faustroll's "Elements of Pataphysics" states that, "even the common herd has learned that the *real* world is composed of ellipses, and tradesmen keep their wine in barrels rather than cylinders." (Jarry 1965, p. 194.) Take note however - for these were *not* my italics. (My italics.) Jarry chooses, through italicization, to emphasize that it is in the *real* world (Jarry's italics, re-claimed by myself.) that these forms hold sway. For perfect circles can be such only in the imaginary; as soon as they are articulated and inscribed, presence intervenes in this perfect operation of absence, and so they may appear to you, dear reader, as *elliptical* rather than *circular* arguments. (Both my italics.) Like a circle, these Pataphysical arguments end in the same place

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This being the case, all "actual" events and ideas must be approached as metaphor.

where they have begun; but the routes by which they travel there have been mediated by their meeting with the resistances of reality, of actuality, and as a result are unexpected, irregular, elliptical. The argumentative course taken affects the argument, but not the conclusion, for an ellipse, while not circular, is nonetheless a closed shape.[39]

One might, now that I see a familiar point up ahead along the line traced by this irregular textual arc, take this very text as an example: beginning (as any potential Nagean Pataphysics must) with the conclusion, ending (by definition of its starting place) where it began, but avoiding the perfect (which is to say, in-iterable) arcs demanded by a positivist logic which insists, despite, to my mind, lacking the spark of outlandishness that I find necessary for a really interesting (mis)read, on pointing to the banal *first* world (My italics.) that lies (we are told) somewhere beyond the text.

("Ha ha," agreed Bosse-de-Nage wholeheartedly, and his hurried exit carried with it the most ardent protestations of zeal.)

[39] Of course ellipses are not the only shapes to be suggested by various potential Pataphysical argumentative models; for instance, one might speculate as to what might constitute a spiral model; however, these other potential forms must continue to wait for (Anti-)elucidation.

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